

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Too many Virginians continue to feel the effects of our nation's sluggish job market and weak economy. Many families continue to experience difficulties, especially with the broad, indiscriminate budget cuts, known as sequestration, which went into effect on March 1. Even without the implementation of sequestration, the nation's unemployment rate remains at 7.7% - a figure which, I believe, still represents a jobs crisis. This past week, the House of Representatives took an important step by considering the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act, a bill aimed at reforming our nation's workforce development system. In 2011, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified over 47 federal job training programs that were either duplicative or flat-out ineffective. The SKILLS Act would eliminate or consolidate these programs in order to ensure that our workforce development system is effective and applicable to our current job market and to the needs of our nation's workers and the employers who wish to hire them. I proudly supported this bill, which moves to the Senate now for consideration, and I will continue to support smart, commonsense policies that promote economic growth and job creation in the United States.

Job creation was also a topic in a recent hearing held by the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, titled, "America's Onshore Energy Resources: Creating Jobs, Securing America, and Lowering Prices." I enjoyed the opportunity to hear from experts about how domestic energy production can lead to job growth, both directly and indirectly. The subcommittee held a similar hearing on March 5 that focused specifically on our offshore energy opportunities. One of the witnesses in that hearing told the subcommittee that energy production off Virginia's coast could support thousands of jobs and inject billions of dollars into our Commonwealth's economy. This is an idea I've long supported. I've also been a part of a bipartisan group from Virginia's congressional delegation advocating for an energy policy that opens up our offshore areas to environmentally responsible oil and natural gas exploration. I believe that promoting American energy independence is a matter of both national security and economic importance. With a comprehensive energy structure that utilizes renewable, sustainable forms of energy as well as domestic oil and natural gas, the U.S. would no longer be forced to rely on unstable regions of the world in order to power our lives, and many skilled workers across our Commonwealth and nation would be able to get back to work.

In my role as Chairman of the Armed Services Committee's Readiness Subcommittee, I hosted a hearing to address something that would affect jobs of another sort: a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), which is the process of shifting, consolidating or closing our military facilities around the country, in order to see savings, or "payback." The implementation of the previous BRAC round, which occurred in 2005, was initially estimated to cost \$21 billion. That estimation has now risen to \$35 billion – an increase of 66% - and yet we do not expect to see the payback until 2018. During the subcommittee hearing on Thursday, I was able to hear from administration officials about the potential for BRAC proposals during the next fiscal year. I believe Congress has a duty and a responsibility to fully understand the rationale behind any

proposed plans that would affect both our defense resources and the readiness of our forces. I have serious concerns about whether implementing another round of BRAC would effectively provide rapid savings during this time of significant variability in the budget and our overall force structure. Congress plays a critical oversight role in fully understanding these types of proposals, and I will continue to engage in thoughtful discussions about issues that affect our defense resources and the readiness of our forces. However, as I said in a statement following this hearing, if the administration decides to offer a request for another BRAC round this fiscal year, I would again vigorously and actively oppose such an initiative based upon our discussion.

The main streets of Virginia's First District are full of ideas to get our economy back on track, and your feedback is so important to me as I serve you. I can be reached by telephone at (202) 225-4261, through my website ( [www.wittman.house.gov](http://www.wittman.house.gov) ), on Facebook ( [www.facebook.com/repobwittman](http://www.facebook.com/repobwittman) ), and via Twitter ( [www.twitter.com/robwittman](http://www.twitter.com/robwittman) ).

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee where he is the Chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee.*